

NEWS RELEASE

USDA Forest Service Santa Fe National Forest



For Immediate Release

CONTACT: LAWRENCE LUJAN
(505) 438-7628

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TWIN HILLS PRESCRIBED BURN IN THE CAJA DEL RIO TO BEGIN NEXT WEEK

(Santa Fe, NM)—The Santa Fe National Forest is planning once again to burn approximately 600-800 acres in the Caja Del Rio Plateau located approximately 13 miles northwest of Santa Fe. Implementation of the Twin Hills Prescribed burn is scheduled to begin the week of June 12th, depending on weather conditions and the availability of fire personnel and resources.

This is the same prescribed burn that was planned for last month and was cancelled because conditions were not met.

The conditions necessary for this burn require lower fuel moistures, lower relative humidity, higher temperatures, and 10-15 mph winds. “People will probably want to know why we’re planning to burn here while the rest of the Forest is in fire restrictions,” said Sandy Hurlocker, Española District Ranger. “The answer is for fire to give us good results; we need warmer and drier conditions for fire to carry on flat terrain.”

“Under favorable conditions the prescribed burn will have a low risk of escape,” said Lawrence Garcia, District Fire Management Officer Garcia, but adds that “to lessen the risk even more, we have divided the total project area into smaller blocks with roads and natural boundaries serving as fire control lines around the burn area.” On the day of ignition, if all conditions including: weather, fuels, assigned resources, smoke dispersal and contingency plans are not met, the burn will be rescheduled.

Unlike the timbered slopes of the Jemez and Sangre de Cristo Mountains where fire restrictions are in place, the risks and hazards in the Caja Del Rio do not warrant restricting public use at this time. Rather than thick forests, the open, patchy vegetation on the plateau means a fire would be very difficult to spread.

The burn will benefit the plateau’s grasslands by: stimulating grass growth and reducing the encroachment of piñon/juniper. The reduction of piñon/juniper and sage will improve food and habitat for wildlife.

Smoke emitted from the burn is expected to be low due to the nature of the fuels but may be visible from Santa Fe, Los Alamos, White Rock, Cochiti, along I-25 and NM 599.

For more information on the Twin Hills project, visit our website at <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/sfe/> or contact the Española Ranger District @ (505) 753-7331.

